QASidra Ethical Research Guidelines

The intended audience for these guidelines is anyone undertaking educational research at QASidra, either as part of an EDI or external course and community members seeking information about such guidelines.

These guidelines reflect the British Educational Research Association's Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2018) and QA Sidra expects its employees to conduct themselves in a way that reflects these guidelines and the vision and mission of QAS.

Principles underpinning the guidelines

The Association endorses the set of ethical principles agreed in 2015 by the Academy of Social Sciences (AcSS)3 through in-depth consultation with its member learned societies (including BERA). These principles are as follows.

a. Social science is fundamental to a democratic society and should be inclusive of different interests, values, funders, methods and perspectives.

b. All social science should respect the privacy, autonomy, diversity, values and dignity of individuals, groups and communities.

c. All social science should be conducted with integrity throughout, employing the most appropriate methods for the research purpose.

d. All social scientists should act with regard to their social responsibilities in conducting and disseminating their research.

e. All social science should aim to maximise benefit and minimise harm.

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Academy of Social Sciences [AcSS] (2015) 'Five Ethics Principles for Social Science Research', London.
https://www.acss.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/5-EthicsPrinciples-for-Social-Science-Research-Flyer.pdf

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Overview

QAS believes all educational research should be conducted within an ethic of respect for: the person; knowledge; democratic values; the quality of educational research; and academic freedom. (BERA 2018)

We recommend that at all stages of a project – from planning through conduct to reporting – educational researchers undertake wide consultation to identify relevant ethical issues, including listening to those in the research context/site(s), stakeholders and institutions.

This means that ethical decision-making becomes an actively deliberative, ongoing and iterative process of assessing and reassessing the situation and issues as they arise.

These guidelines are intended to promote active and concrete responses following from deliberation of the issues. Researchers and their students and collaborators should – in their research proposals, reports, work with schools and so on – explicitly indicate how they are adhering to those points included in these guidelines that are salient to their work.

Certain dilemmas are identified within these guidelines, but others that cannot be covered here will also arise. PUE will provide guidelines.

Application and acceptance of research at QASidra will be via written application and interview by the Learning and Teaching Council (process below). It is assumed that all applicants read and understand the complete BERA guidelines (LINK). Interviews will focus on this understanding.

Adherence to an ethic of respect implies the following responsibilities on the part of researchers. (BERA 2018)

*Consent
- It is normally expected that participants' voluntary informed consent to be involved in a study will be obtained at the start of the study and that researchers will remain sensitive and open to the possibility that participants may wish, for any reason and at any time, to withdraw their consent.
- Researchers should do everything they can to ensure that all potential participants understand, as well as they can, what is involved in a study. They should be told why their participation is necessary, what they will be asked to do, what will happen to the information they provide, how that information will be used and how and to whom it will be reported/published/shared.
- The producers of publicly accessible data may not have considered the fact that it might be used for research purposes, and it should not be assumed that such data is available for researchers to use without consent.
- When working with secondary or documentary data, the sensitivity of the data, who created it, the intended audience of its creators, its original purpose and its intended uses in the research are all important considerations. If secondary data concerning participants are to be reused, ownership of the datasets should be determined, and the owners consulted to ascertain whether they can give consent on behalf of the participants.
- Opt-in or opt-out procedures of gaining consent should be considered and accommodated.

Transparency
- Researchers should aim to be open and honest with participants and other stakeholders.

- Principles of consent also apply to possible reuse of data. This covers two different possible future uses: secondary data analysis by the same research team to address new research questions or the sharing of the dataset for use by other researchers. In both cases, if data are to be reused, this should be made clear as a possibility when gaining initial consent.
- Researchers should recognise the right of all participants to withdraw from the research for any or no reason, and at any time, and participants should be informed of this right.
- In online research contexts, if authors of postings or other material withdraw or delete data then that data should not be used in research.

Right to withdraw
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Incentives
- Payment, of any kind, for participation in educational research, is not permissible, not least because of the extra burden of cost that the extension of this practice would place on the practice of research.

*Harm prevention/excessive demands
- Ethical research design and execution should aim to both put participants at their ease and avoid making excessive demands on them.
- Researchers should immediately reconsider any actions occurring during the research process that appear to cause emotional or other harm, in order to minimise such harm.

Privacy and data storage
- The confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is considered the norm for the conduct of research.
- Researchers may need to negotiate an ethical course of action, one that secures a very clear agreement about anonymity and about subsequent use of the data.
- Researchers need to be aware that visual material could be misused by others (for example, as an example of poor practice), and should take steps to prevent this as far as possible.
- Researchers need to be aware of the possible consequences to participants should it prove possible for them to be identified by association or inference. They should take all reasonable precautions to avoid identification – for example, by fictionalising personas.
- researchers should consider the question of what online content, in what circumstances, they would be obligated to report to relevant authorities and/or online service providers, bearing in mind any agreements entered into regarding confidentiality and anonymity
- Researchers should ensure that data are kept securely and that the form of any publication (including those published online) does not directly or indirectly lead to a breach of agreed confidentiality and anonymity. Researchers must comply with the legal requirements around privacy and data protection.

Disclosure

- If behaviour reported by participants is likely to be harmful to the participants or to others, the researchers must also consider disclosure.

*When working with QAS Student population
All researchers must comply with PUE /QAS Child Protection policy protocols

Application- [form](#)

Works Cited

Academy of Social Sciences [AcSS] (2015) 'Five Ethics Principles for Social Science Research', London. https://www.acss.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/5-EthicsPrinciples-for-Social-Science-Research-Flyer.pdf

Ethical Guidelines For Educational Research, Fourth Edition (2018). *Bera.Ac.Uk*, 2020, https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018. Accessed 9 Mar 2020.